

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 MCT-01 HA-05 AID-05 CCO-00  
FBOE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSC-05 SP-02  
OC-06 OPR-02 PA-01 USSS-00 CA-01 A-01 SCS-06  
OMB-01 SS-15 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /099 W  
-----083623 110838Z /20

O R 110743Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8642  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3851

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, PERP, SY  
SUBJ: THE CURRENT SITUATION: A CONSERVATIVE SUNNI VIEW

1. EMBOFF MET JULY 10 WITH SHAFIQ WAZZAN, SPOKESMAN FOR THE  
CONSERVATIVE SUNNI ISLAMIC GROUPING. WAZZAN HAD MET JULY 7  
IN DAMASCUS WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM.  
WAZZAN REMARKED THAT ASAD HAD SAID THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE SYRIANS WERE NEITHER PRO-MUSLIM NOR PRO-CHRISTIAN  
AND WERE INTERESTED ONLY IN HELPING BUILD A UNIFIED LEBANESE  
STATE. SUCH A STATE, ASAD SAID, WAS FUNDAMENTAL TO SYRIAN  
INTERESTS, BECAUSE WHAT HAPPENED IN LEBANON AFFECTED WHAT  
HAPPENED IN SYRIA.

B. THE SYRIAN ARMY WOULD CONTINUE TO FIRE OR STOP FIRING  
DEPENDING ON WHAT PRESIDENT SARKIS WANTED. THE SYRIAN ARMY  
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RESERVED THE RIGHT TO PROTECT ITSELF, BUT ON JULY 6 ASAD HAD  
ORDERED SYRIANS NOT TO RETURN FIRE EVEN IF FIRED ON. ASAD  
NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS NOT SURE HOW LONG THE SYRIANS  
COULD MAINTAIN THIS POSTURE IN THE FACE OF CHRISTIAN PROVO-  
CATIONS.

C. ASAD HAD VIGOROUSLY DENIED THAT THE SYRIANS HAD POSED

ANY CONDITIONS FOR A CEASE-FIRE. HE ALSO SAID THAT WHEN BOUTROS WENT TO DAMASCUS ON JULY 5, BOUTROS HAD NOT PRESENTED ANY PLAN FOR ENDING THE CURRENT CRISIS, BUT HAD MERELY COMPLAINED THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. (WE NOTE FONMIN KHADDAM RECENTLY TOLD OUR DAMASCUS CHARGE THE SAME THING.) ON THE ONE HAND, SARKIS BELIEVED THE SYRIANS WERE RIGHT IN TRYING TO CONTROL THE PHALANGE; ON THE OTHER HAND, HE DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE SYRIANS SHELL INNOCENT PEOPLE IN ASHRAFIYAH.

D. ASAD HAD ALSO REMARKED THAT HE HAD TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ATTITUDE OF THE ARMY WHOSE PRIDE HAD BEEN WOUNDED BY THE INCIDENTS IN FAYYADIYAH AND AYN AR-RUMMANEH EARLIER THIS YEAR. (WAZZAN COMMENTED THAT DURING THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENT, A SYRIAN GENERAL HAD TOLD HIM THAT 32 OFFICERS OF THE RANK OF COLONEL AND GENERAL HAD GONE TO ASAD AND COMPLAINED BITTERLY THAT THEY COULD NOT ACCEPT FURTHER HUMILIATION OF THE ARMY. WAZZAN BELIEVED THAT ASAD WOULD RISK A COUP D'ETAT IF HE DID NOT MEET TO SOME EXTENT THE WISHES OF SUCH OFFICERS).

5. WAZZAN SAID THAT THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND SYRIANS HAD DRIVEN THE LEBANESE MUSLIMS BACK INTO THE ARMS OF THE PALESTINIANS. THE MUSLIMS, WHO HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY DISENCHANTED WITH THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, NOW BELIEVED THEY NEEDED ARMED FEDAYEEN TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST  
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THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS.

6. WAZZAN NOTED THAT HE HAD TALKED BY TELEPHONE WITH SARKIS ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE MEETING WITH EMBOFF. WAZZAN HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT SARKIS WAS SOMEWHAT "MORE CALM" NOW AND LESS LIKELY TO RESIGN.

7. WAZZAN SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT RESIGN, BUT HE MADE PLAIN HIS SUPPORT FOR SARKIS WAS LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC. WAZZAN AFFIRMED THAT LEBANON WOULD SURVIVE EVEN IF THE PRESIDENT RESIGNED. SARKIS HAD REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED HIS INABILITY TO MAKE NECESSARY DECISIONS.

8. MOREOVER, WAZZAN BELIEVED THAT SINCE THE EXPLOSION IN BOUTROS' APARTMENT IN MARCH 1977, BOTH PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD BEEN INTIMIDATED BY THE LEBANESE FRONT AND WERE AFRAID TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY. WAZZAN SAID THE LEBANESE FRONT CONTINUED TO INTIMIDATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. BEIRUT RADIO, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD BROADCAST ONE TIME PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS' JULY 4 STATEMENT SUPPORTING THE ADF. THE LEBANESE FRONT HAD THEN GOTTEN HOLD OF THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION, CHARLES RIZK, AND FRIGHTENED HIM SO BADLY THAT

BEIRUT RADIO WOULD NOT CARRY THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT  
A SECOND TIME. PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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